

BEYOND THE EXHIBITS

North Carolina Museum of History

Toy Boom! Toys from the 1950s and '60s Exhibit

The Baby Boomer era (late-1940s to mid-1960s) was a time of great abundance for middle-class America. Economic prosperity was at an all-time high and the influx of television helped propel a new middle-class into a consumer-driven society.

Additionally, a soaring birthrate made the country a child-focused culture. These children, however, grew up in a time of great dramatic change and parents were caught between a familiar past and a complex future. Toys would help children find their correct place in society, or so parents wanted to believe. Toy featured in the exhibit reflected the energy, ambition, and abundance of a prosperous era, but they also channeled the uncertainties of the period.

Below is additional information connecting *Toy Boom! Toys from the 1950s and '60s* to educational resources. For the richest student experience, complete the educational packet:

- Read "1960s: How Does Change Happen?" from the Fall 2019 issue of the *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Read "Toys as History: Playing in the 1960s" from the Fall 2019 issue of the *Tar Heel Junior Historian* Magazine.
- Make DIY Play-Doh!
- Dive into the history of Mr. Potato Head and then create your own.
- Get creative and design your own potato stamps.

The 1960s: How Does Change Happen?

by Benjamin Filene

If you're writing an essay and your teacher pushes you to have a thesis or main-message statement, a safe bet is "It was a time of change." That's the historian's fallback position: Every era was a time of change. And yet, some times do seem "changier" than others.

It feels like we're living through one of those right now, and, for sure, the 1960s—the subject of this issue—was a time of upheaval. Every aspect of American society seemed to be going through an earthquake. More than 50 years later, historians are still struggling to make sense of it all. Were the 1960s a turning point, a detour, or a dead end (or all of the above)?

This historical question opens up a broader one that has direct relevance to today: How does change happen? In the 1960s, the traditional ways of doing things were being challenged on so many levels—from hairstyles to politics to gender roles to war. As we look back, we can consider which tactics or trends led to long-term changes and which turned out to be just unsustainable

fads. The articles in this issue, then, are about the 1960s, but they also are treating the period as a case study—an example from which we can draw broader lessons about history and how it works. With that in mind, here are four takeaway themes to think about as you read the magazine's articles.

Under-the-Radar vs. Headline History

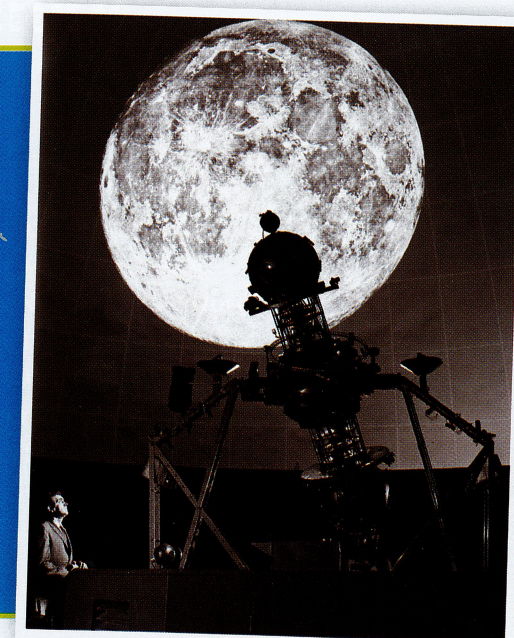
Even at the time, Americans in the 1960s recognized that they were living through a historic period. Most would probably have pointed to the Vietnam War or the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. No doubt those were historic events, but, looking back, historians now also see the importance of some less publicly prominent happenings: the rise of political conservatives on campus, changing ideas about whether women should work, the beginnings of the environmental movement. Sometimes changes bubbling beneath the surface end up having the greatest impact.

(continued on page 4)

Left: On January 12, 1964, the Chapel Hill Freedom Committee organized a 13-mile march from Durham to Chapel Hill. Once there, at least 500 crowded into the First Baptist Church to hear CORE national chairperson, Floyd McKissick, and John Knowles, the gay white author of *A Separate Peace*, speak at the indoor rally. Image © Jim Wallace.

Right: The Moon as projected inside the Morehead Planetarium, where more than 60 astronauts trained during the early Space Race. July 6, 1962. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, UNC-Chapel Hill.

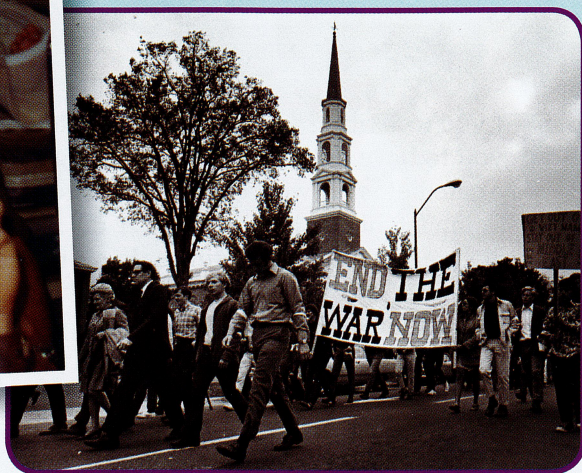
Far right: In 1959 Barbie rocked the world of toys and games—and this later "Hippie Barbie" reflected the times. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.





Left: Army nurse Diane Kay Corcoran holds a Vietnamese child at the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh, Vietnam. The unnamed wounded soldier flashes a smile and the peace sign for the camera. Image courtesy of the Diane Kay Corcoran Papers (WV0526) Betty H. Carter Women Veterans Historical Project, Martha Hodges Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries, UNC–Greensboro, <http://go.uncg.edu/wvhp>.

Below: Most Americans supported the war in Vietnam in the beginning. But as the fighting wore on, many took to the streets to call for an end to the war. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, UNC–Chapel Hill.



(continued from page 3)

Unsung Actors vs. “Great Men and Women”

Presidents, generals, and civil rights martyrs dominate textbook treatments of the 1960s, but the essays in this issue also show the power of seemingly ordinary people to shape history. Right here in North Carolina, students, cafeteria workers, teachers, reporters, servicemen, and parents experienced—and, along the way, helped shape—the events of the time. As these essays show, an extraordinary number of the changes



President Lyndon B. Johnson (center, in dark suit) and Governor Terry Sanford of North Carolina (second from right) pose with the Marlow family near Rocky Mount to promote the president's “War on Poverty” campaign. It was based on Sanford's NC Fund. Image courtesy of the Billy E. Barnes Photographic Collection (P0034), North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, Wilson Library, UNC–Chapel Hill.

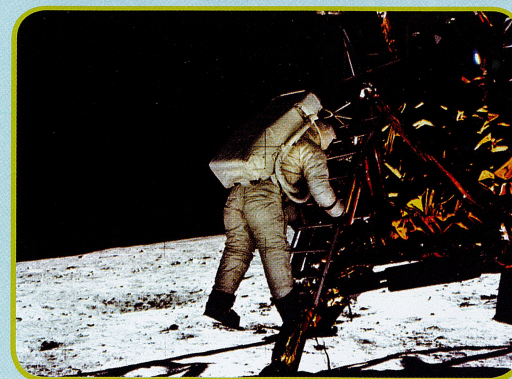
of the 1960s were sparked by the actions and opinions of young people. Together, these diverse stories can help broaden our understanding of whom we see as a history-maker. Ask your grandparents or others who lived in the 1960s how they experienced the era!

Organized Change vs. Improvised Surprises

Sometimes people in the 1960s set out purposely to change the world. They demanded racial equality or pushed to end the Vietnam War. Other times, change snuck up on people, and it felt as if events were swirling beyond anyone's control: a campus protest turns violent, a new song becomes an anthem. Participants in these moments had to make decisions on the fly—about whether to join the crowd or go one's own way, seek a compromise or take a stand, follow orders or break the rules. History often judges these decisions differently than did people at the time. As you read the stories in these articles, consider: What would you have done?

Decades vs. Movements

Why do historians like decades so much anyway? It's convenient to imagine that the past neatly divides into 10-year segments, but (big surprise) real life doesn't really unfold that way. Recognizing that fact, historians increasingly talk about “The Long 1960s” (a game-changing idea originated by North Carolina historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall). While we recognize that a lot of important events occurred during that



“That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind” were the words spoken by astronaut Neil Armstrong as he became the first human to set foot on the Moon, July 20, 1969. He was one of more than 60 astronauts who trained at the Morehead Planetarium in Chapel Hill in the 1960s. Image courtesy of NASA.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave an early version of his “I Have a Dream” speech in Rocky Mount on November 27, 1962. Photograph by J. B. Harren, courtesy of Andre Knight.



decade, we also want to understand what led up to those pivotal moments and what followed from them.

The Greensboro sit-ins of February 1960 were hugely important, but the Civil Rights movement started years before that date and continued on for years after 1970. The same is true for the women's rights or gay rights movements. Taking the long view gives us a better

sense of how change really unfolds. As you can see, the 1960s offers no easy answers, but the period does speak powerfully to us today. Looking at the decade from many angles can help broaden what moments or movements we consider as change-making in history and, too, can help us recognize a broader set of change-makers. Along the way, if we listen carefully to the people who made that history—through oral history interviews,

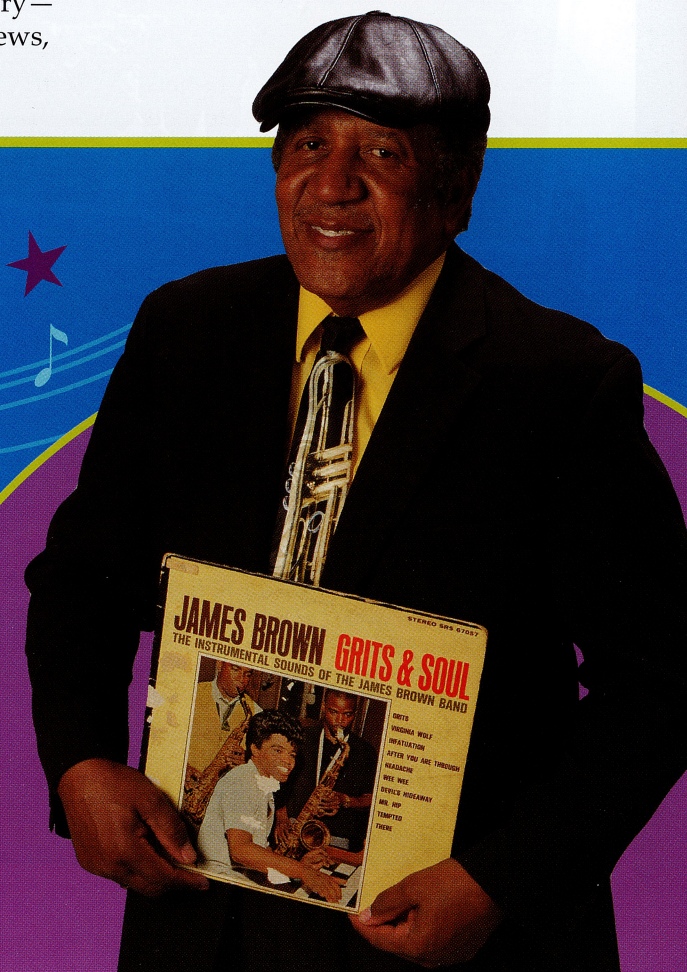
old newspapers, or local-history documents—we can also expand our sense of who counts as a historian. We hope you'll use this issue of the magazine as a springboard that helps you dive in and explore the 1960s histories of your family and your community. 🌸

Benjamin Filene is chief curator at the North Carolina Museum of History.

Music Gets Funky in the Sixties

Nat Jones was a musical prodigy from Adkin High School in Kinston, where he graduated as valedictorian under Geneva Perry, a renowned music teacher. After graduating with honors in music from NC College for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University), Jones taught high school in Washington, NC, and Kinston before he was hired in 1964 as the band director for funk music pioneer James Brown. In turn, Jones hired college graduates like fellow Kinstonian Dick Knight (right), who had been music director at Kinston's Savannah High School. Knight joined the band in 1964 as a trumpeter.

Right: Dick Knight holds his original copy of the album *Grits & Soul*, 1964. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.





Toys as History: Playing in the 1960s

by Katie Edwards

Toys are fun! But do they have a deeper meaning?

The 1960s was a turbulent period in United States history, but also one of great change. Events like the Cold War, the Space Race, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, and the women's movement captured Americans' attention as news flooded their television sets.

This period also saw a time of incredible prosperity for some. Middle-class parents and youth had more disposable income than ever before, and by 1960, nearly half of America's population was under the age of 18. This led to a booming toy industry. Toys like Etch a Sketch, Mousetrap, and Twister were just some of the many zany toys that came out during this period. But others reflected the cultural events that influenced the American public.

The Cold War

The Cold War was one example of how international conflict affected toys and popular culture in the 1960s. Although the United States and the Soviet Union had been allies during World War II, the tension between the two increased after the war ended. In 1962 American intelligence discovered Soviet missiles in Cuba. This week of tension, known as the

Cuban Missile Crisis, led to further shaky ground between the two nations.

Thanks to this Cold War tension between the United States and the Soviet Union, the spy fiction genre swept the popular-culture stage. In 1962 the first major James Bond film—titled *Dr. No*—was released. It was quickly followed by popular television spy series like *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *I Spy*, *Get Smart*, and *Mission Impossible*. Toy companies flooded shelves with secret-agent merchandise like the Secret Sam toy line, James Bond toys and games, and other spy gear.

The Space Race

The Cold War also extended into space exploration. The "Space Race" began in 1957 when the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik 1*—the world's first artificial satellite—into space. Suddenly there was a new urgency for the United States to venture into space. In 1958 the government created NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration), and soon programs like Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo became high priority for putting America in the forefront of space exploration. In 1961 President John F. Kennedy boldly declared that the United States would put a man on the Moon before the end of the decade. Astronaut Neil Armstrong took the first step on the Moon on July 20, 1969.

Space toys like rockets, robots, and other gear became hot sellers in the 1960s. In 1961 the Ideal toy company released Robot Commando, which obeyed spoken commands, moved forward, turned to its left and right, and fired toy rockets and missiles. Other robot toys that came out included Rock'Em Sock'Em Robots, Big Loo, and Mr. Machine. Television shows like *Lost in Space*, *The Jetsons*, and *Star Trek* inspired numerous

toys. In 1966 Mattel released the Major Matt Mason space action figures to compete with Hasbro's G.I. Joes. Today, space toys from the 1960s are highly collectible and offer a glimpse back to the time when Americans first ventured into the next frontier.

The Vietnam War

Conflict in Southeast Asia had been going on since the 1950s due to America's commitment to preventing the spread of communism. However, when President Lyndon B. Johnson took office in 1963, it became a full-scale war. The draft of American soldiers began in 1964, and in 1965, the United States entered the Vietnam War.

War toys had always been popular sellers in America, and the early 1960s was no different. The toy company Remco released several sea-related ships, including battle-ships and aircraft carriers. The popular board game Battleship was also released in this decade.

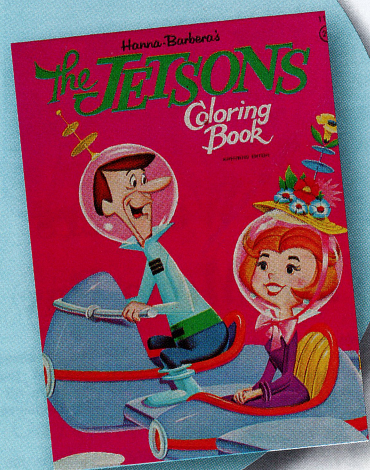
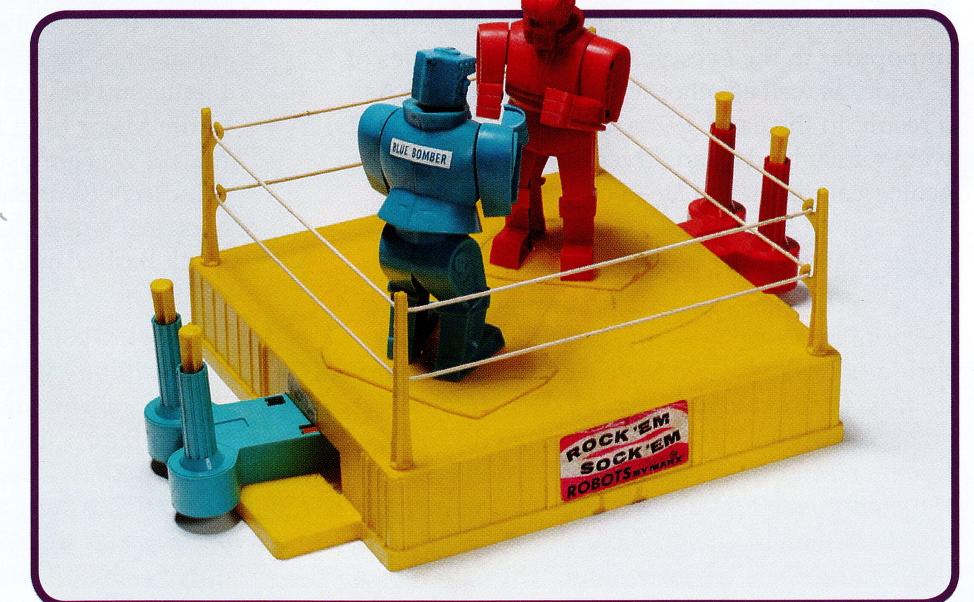
The most popular of these toys hit the shelves in 1964, when G.I. Joe was introduced to American children—aimed at boys. Joe was

(continued on page 32)



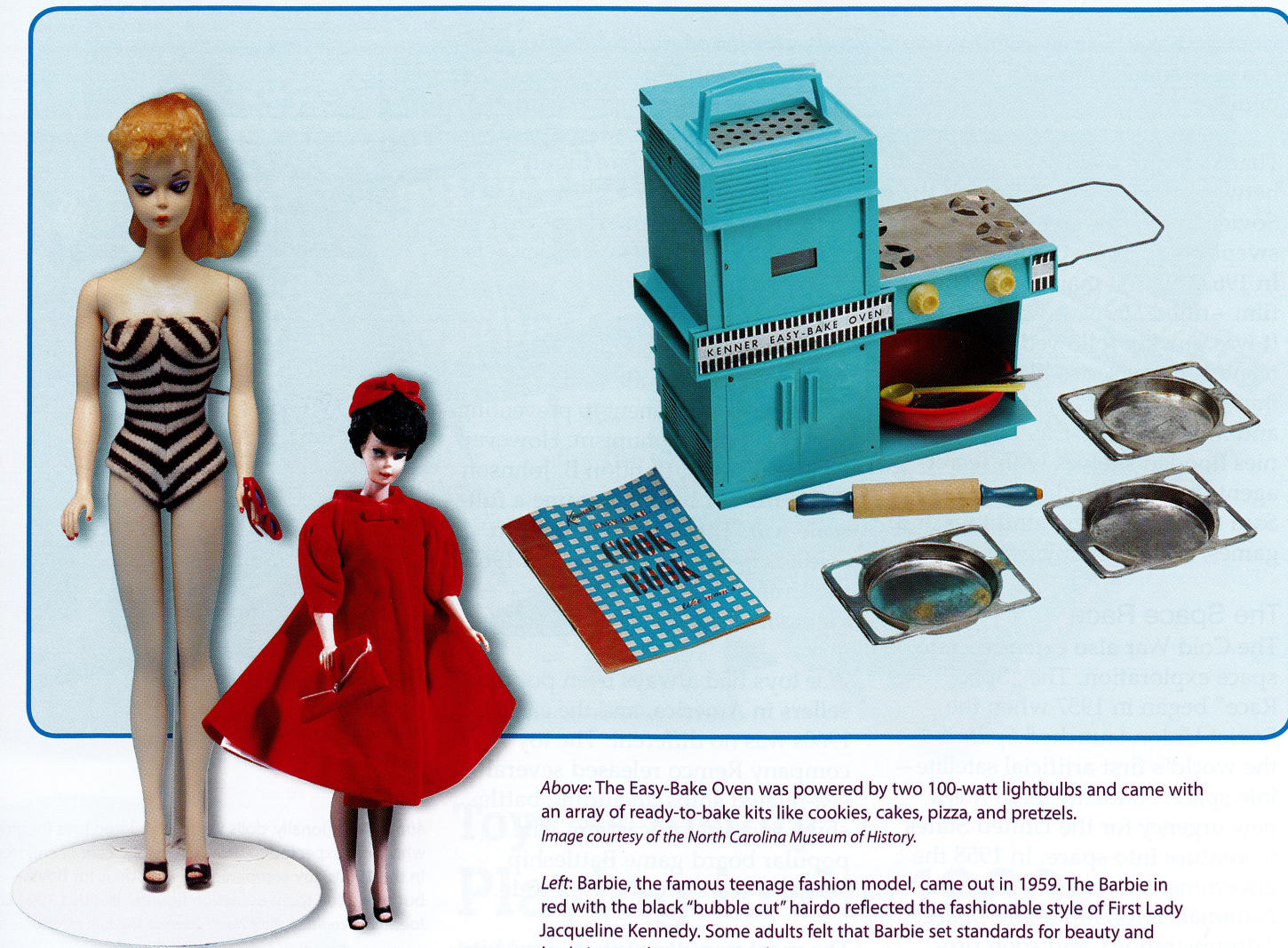
Above: Traditionally, dolls were considered toys for girls, who were expected to grow up to take care of children. In the 1960s, toy companies created dolls for boys—but marketed them as "action figures," like this 1964 G.I. Joe. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Bottom: Rock'Em Sock'Em Robots was one of the many zany toys that were released in the 1960s during the nation's Space-Race craze. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.



Top: The Cold War inspired lots of toys and games about spies—like this board game based on the movie character James Bond. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Above: This coloring book was based on the space-age cartoon *The Jetsons*, which ran from 1962 to 1963. It was the first television show to be broadcast in color on the ABC network. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.



Above: The Easy-Bake Oven was powered by two 100-watt lightbulbs and came with an array of ready-to-bake kits like cookies, cakes, pizza, and pretzels. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

Left: Barbie, the famous teenage fashion model, came out in 1959. The Barbie in red with the black "bubble cut" hairdo reflected the fashionable style of First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. Some adults felt that Barbie set standards for beauty and body image that were unrealistic. Image courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.

(continued from page 31)

originally released as an action sailor, Marine, and Air Force pilot with an array of accessories. However, by the late 1960s, the Vietnam War had become unpopular in the eyes of Americans, and sales of G.I. Joe, as well as other war toys, decreased. As a result, in the early 1970s, G.I. Joe and his friends were reimagined as an adventure team, fighting ecological disasters instead of military-themed.

The Civil Rights Movement

In the 1960s, black Americans brought attention to social injustice by demonstrating civil protests throughout the United States. One of the most famous of these protests occurred in 1960, when black students staged a peaceful sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro. In 1964 President Johnson pushed the Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in public places. But many groups became more radical as they grew impatient with reforms.

Before the 1960s, mass-produced toys only represented white children. However, by the early 1960s, major toy companies began to incorporate diverse toys into their popular toy lines. Mattel began to produce black Chatty Cathy dolls in 1963. The first black G.I. Joe was released in 1965; shortly after, Mattel released Lieutenant Jeff Long, who was the first black member of the Major Matt Mason space crew. Jeff Long's release was almost 20 years before Guion "Guy" Bluford became the first African American astronaut in space. Finally, Christie, who is considered the first black Barbie, made her debut in 1968.

The Feminist Movement

Up until the early 1960s, middle-class women had very limited paths in life: They were expected to get married, have a family, and take care of the home. If women worked, they were restricted in their career choices. But in 1963, Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* hit the shelves. Although the book focused only on the difficulties of middle- and upper-class



white women, it was a breakthrough in expressing the dissatisfaction of women's roles in America. Women responded, and the push for women's rights grew in the 1960s and 1970s.

Toys released in the 1960s, as in previous decades, were very gender specific and were slow to respond to the societal changes women strived for. Girls' toys focused on preparing girls for a life as a homemaker, with an emphasis on



Before the 1960s, most mass-produced dolls only represented white children. But soon toys began to reflect the changes brought by the Civil Rights movement. In 1968 Mattel came out with Christie (near left), considered the first African American Barbie. The Julia Barbie doll (in the nurse's uniform) was based on the hit TV show *Julia*, which ran from 1968 to 1971. The show starred Diahann Carroll as Julia Baker, a widowed registered nurse, and her son, Corey, played by Marc Copage (shown together in photo at left). *Julia* was the first prime-time TV show that starred an African American woman, and Carroll won a Golden Globe for her role. Doll images courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History. Publicity photo for the television show *Julia*, public domain.

enhancing their beauty. The Easy-Bake Oven, released in 1963, allowed girls to work on their baking skills safely at an early age. The Suzy Homemaker line of toys released in 1966 included such items as a toy blender, jet-spray iron, and washing machine. Finally, the board game *What Shall I Be?*—released in 1966—was designed to allow young girls to choose a

career. The only choices, however, were a nurse, teacher, airline stewardess, ballet dancer, actress, or model. It wasn't until the game was rereleased in 1976 that more progressive options were allowed for girls, including surgeon, lawyer, and astronaut. 🌸

Katie Edwards is an associate curator at the North Carolina Museum of History.

Think About It!

This 1966 game—*What Shall I Be? The Exciting Game of Career Girls*—was created to help girls imagine their future jobs. But look closely.

- What career choices were the girls offered?
- What does the game tell you about women working in the 1960s?
- How do the choices compare to today?
- Whether you are a girl or boy:
 - How would you feel if you were told you could pick only one of these careers?
 - How would you feel if you were told you could only do a certain job because of your gender?

Images courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History.



DIY Play-Doh!

"I Can Make *Anything* with Play-Doh" 1956 Marketing Slogan

Would you believe the substance that became Play-Doh was first invented and marketed in the 1930s—for use as wallpaper cleaner? By the 1950s, however, many teachers had discovered that younger children could manipulate the cleaning paste more easily than the modeling clay that schools stocked in their classrooms. In 1956 the inventors' family members realized they had a hit and decided to rebrand the product, which they renamed "Play-Doh."

Here are some playdough recipes to try at home!

Colored Playdough

Materials

- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon cream of tartar
- Food coloring
- Saucepan
- 1 cup flour

Directions

1. Combine water, oil, salt, cream of tartar, and food coloring in a saucepan and heat until warm.
2. Remove from heat and add flour.
3. Stir, then knead until smooth. The cream of tartar makes this dough last 6 months or longer, so resist the temptation to omit this ingredient if you don't have it on hand.
4. Store this dough in an airtight container or a Ziploc freezer bag.

Kool-Aid Playdough

Materials

- 1/2 cup salt
- 2 cups water
- Saucepan
- Food coloring, tempera powder, or Kool-Aid powder for color
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cups sifted flour
- 2 tablespoons alum

Directions

1. Combine salt and water in saucepan and boil until salt dissolves.
2. Remove from heat and tint with food coloring, tempera powder, or Kool-Aid.
3. Add oil, flour, and alum.
4. Knead until smooth.
5. This dough will last 2 months or longer.

Salt Playdough

Materials

- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup flour plus additional flour
- Saucepan

Directions

1. Mix salt, water, and flour in saucepan and cook over medium heat.
2. Remove from heat when mixture is thick and rubbery.
3. As the mixture cools, knead in enough flour to make the dough workable.

Basic Uncooked Playdough

Materials

- Bowl
- 1 cup cold water
- 1 cup salt
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- Tempera paint or food coloring
- 3 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch

Directions

1. In bowl, mix water, salt, oil, and enough tempera paint or food coloring to make a bright color.
2. Gradually add flour and cornstarch until the mixture reaches the consistency of bread dough.
3. Store covered.

Oatmeal Playdough

Materials

- 1 part flour
- 1 part water
- 2 parts oatmeal
- Bowl

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl; mix well and knead until smooth.
2. This playdough is not intended to be eaten, but it will not hurt a child who decides to taste it.
3. Store covered in refrigerator.
4. Your child can make this playdough without help; however, it doesn't last as long as cooked playdough.

Peanut Butter Playdough

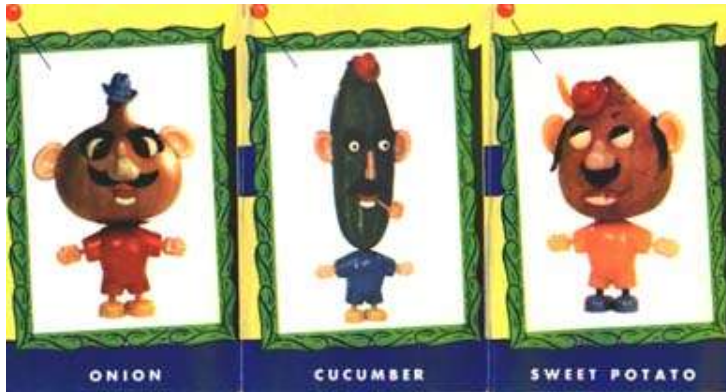
Materials

- 2 cups peanut butter
- 6 tablespoons honey
- Nonfat dry milk or milk plus flour
- Cocoa or carob for chocolate flavor (optional)
- Edible treats for decoration

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix, adding enough dry milk or milk plus flour to reach the consistency of bread dough.
2. Add cocoa or carob, if desired.
3. Shape, decorate with edible treats, and eat!

The Original Mr. Potato Head



Mr. Potato Head...We Love You!

Photos from a 1957 Instruction sheet

“Any Fruit or Vegetable Makes a Funny Face Man” That was their original slogan!

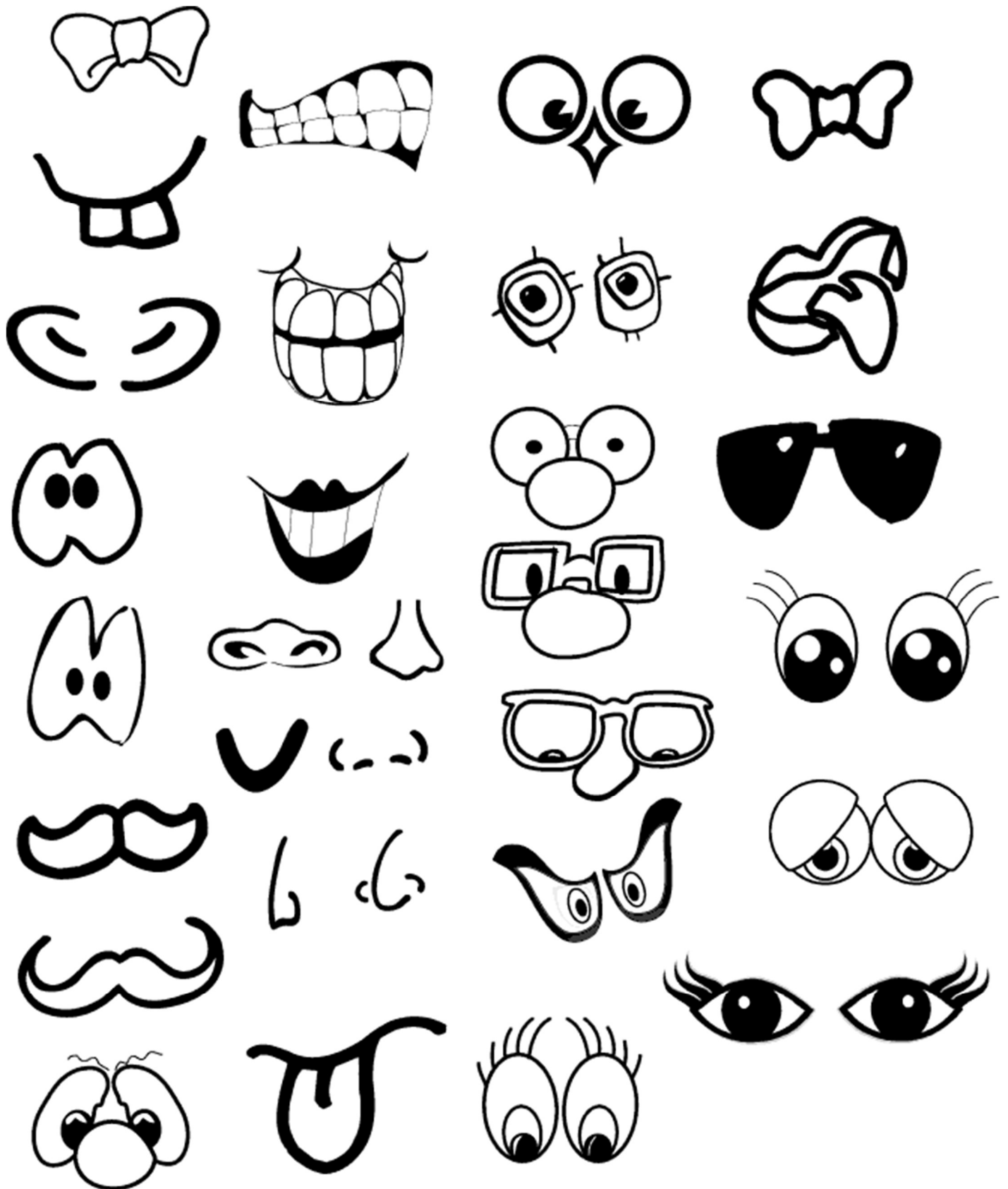
1952: When George Lerner saw his kids playing with their dinner, he grabbed two potatoes and

began decorating them. Mr. Potato Head was born! Mrs. Potato Head—along with a son, Spud, and a daughter, Yam—were marketed soon after. Initially, boxed kits contained only body parts, ready to be used with real potatoes or other vegetables and fruits. A plastic “potato” was added to each kit in 1964, and friends, like Katie the Carrot and Cooky the Cucumber, and more followed. Did you know...Mr. Potato Head was the first toy advertised on television; the ad appeared during an episode of *The Jackie Gleason Show*.

Other interesting facts:

- Hassenfeld brothers (later Hasbro, Inc.) acquired his creation in 1952. The original package included eyes, nose, mouth, ears—28 different plastic facial features in all—along with a Styrofoam head for kids to practice making wacky expressions.
- Mrs. Potato Head appeared in 1953, followed by brother Spud, sister Yam, various pets, and a car and trailer. Hasbro promoted the happy family in LIFE magazine.
- The original concept of using actual fruits and vegetables was dropped in 1964 when Hasbro began supplying a plastic potato with each kit.
- Newly passed U.S. safety standards required that the prongs on the face pieces be less sharp. These revised pieces could not puncture real food.
- In 1987, Mr. Potato Head loses his pipe and becomes the official ‘spokespod’ of the American Cancer Society’s Great American Smokeout.
- Already a celebrity, Mr. Potato Head starred in Toy Story in 1995 and Toy Story 2 in 1998. The only licensed toy among the main characters, he spoke with the voice of comedian Don Rickles.

Now make your own Potato Head! Use materials you can find around the house—from toothpicks, color pencils, or faces from the following page.



NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF HISTORY



5 East Edenton Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-1011
BeyondTheExhibits.com

Potato Stamps

Adapted from <https://www.fun-stuff-to-do.com/easy-crafts-for-kids-8.html>

Directions:

1. Cut a large potato in half. Press the cookie cutter into the center of the potato. Then, leaving the cookie cutter in the potato, slice a rather thick slice around the pattern of the cookie cutter. Remove the outer layer of potato and then the cookie cutter from the shape.
2. Let your potato dry or use a paper towel to remove excess moisture from the potato. (A very wet potato may prevent the paint from attaching properly.)
3. Apply paint to the pattern. This can be done with a paintbrush, small paint roller for more even distribution. You can also spread a thin layer of paint on a glass cutting board or dinner plate and cover your potato pattern with paint by simply pressing onto the paint.
4. Keep a scrap piece of paper on the side to test your print on and to remove excess paint if applied with a brush. Simply press your potato stamp down on the paper you want to decorate. A few prints and you will know exactly how hard to press to get the effect you desire.



Tips!

- Use a separate potato stamp for each color, unless you want the colors to mix.
- Any type of potato will work, even sweet potato if you want larger prints.
- Hold the stamp on the paper or cloth for a few seconds to get the best effect and blot off excess paint on a separate sheet of paper or clean plate before you start (paper plates work great).